



Suggested Policy Directions, 2013-2014

Israel-Diaspora Relations

Examining the Parameters for Advancing Israel-Diaspora Dialogue

JPPI recommends deepening and institutionalizing a permanent Jewish people dialogue mechanism for coordination on Israeli decisions that affect the Diaspora, and on decisions taken in the Jewish world that affect Israel. In this regard, and pursuant to the broad consultative project that the Institute held this year on the Jewish world's views about Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, during the coming year, the Institute will hold another round of seminars in communities around the world as well as an annual conference of leaders from Jewish organizations, communities, and academia.

The discussions will focus on the main issues and challenges by relating to the five dimensions critical to the Jewish people's thriving: geopolitics, community bonds, identity and identification, material resources, and demography. Particular attention will be given to ensure pluralistic settings, the involvement of the younger generation and new initiators in the field, and appropriate gender representation.

At the conclusion of the process, the Institute will submit a report to the government and to Jewish

leadership around the world, including detailed recommendations on strengthening and updating the consultative mechanism, and on the main parameters that should be focused upon.

Explanation

Development of a formal mechanism for dialogue between Israel and the Diaspora is necessary in order to:

1. Preserve the unity of the Jewish people in an age of "free choice" in which the possibility of building and adopting other identities is widely available.
2. Ensure participation of the next generation in Jewish life and in contributing to the community.
3. Strengthen and develop Israel's character as a Jewish and democratic state and as the core state of the Jewish people.
4. Advance Israel-Diaspora relations and those between communities around the world in a way that cultivates and preserves the value of shared responsibility as expressed in the statement: "All Jews are responsible for one another" [b. Sanhedrin 27b].

The Government of Israel

The War against De-legitimization

It is recommended that the Government adopt and implement a comprehensive strategy for the war against the international phenomenon of de-legitimization of Israel, in the spirit of the plan that was developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and of the recommendations made by the Jewish People Policy Institute. The Government should allocate funding at the level required to strengthen the tools and frameworks necessary for the plan's implementation, and in order to enhance inter-ministry cooperation, with an emphasis on the Foreign Ministry while involving Diaspora organizations in its execution.

Explanation

The threat of de-legitimization is of strategic significance for Israel – one that is no less serious than the physical threats the country faces – and human and budgetary resources should be invested accordingly in response to it. Given the severity of the threat, and in comparison to the readiness in the face of other threats, it is important to strengthen the effort and to allocate the funding necessary to do so.

About a year ago, during the presentation of JPPI's Annual Assessment, the Government resolved to assign primary responsibility for handling the phenomenon to the Minister for Strategic Affairs, and his ministry established a dedicated staff and developed a strategic action plan consistent with the conclusions of JPPI's de-legitimization project.

According to these conclusions and plans, the effort at this stage should concentrate – with Foreign Ministry involvement – on certain Western European countries that constitute a dangerous international incubator for the phenomenon and whose governments even provide, directly or indirectly, millions of dollars in funding de-legitimization organizations. This funding helps to bring the phenomenon to other countries, including the United States; at the same time, ties should be expanded with non-Western international actors who are not tainted by classic anti-Semitism (China, India, and Japan); a focused campaign should be waged using sophisticated tools (not necessarily those of the government), including media and legal means, in order to expose the de-legitimizers' true intentions and to place the main perpetrators on the defensive; Israel's "other face" should be presented to international public opinion; and significant international networks should be developed for the war against de-legitimization that include non-Jewish and liberal players while also running a campaign in the cyber arena.

In light of the above, the budget necessary for these activities should be increased substantially.

The Non-Orthodox Streams

JPPI recommends that the State of Israel enhance the status, the role, and the level of official participation of the non-Orthodox Jewish streams (including secular streams) in the religious life of the state, in order to strengthen and underscore its pluralistic, inclusive character. At the same time, initiatives must take into account existing

Israeli perspectives and institutions that provide religion with a public role, and to involve them in the proposals brought up for discussion.

Explanation

The Orthodox rabbinate's monopoly on matters relating to ritual and personal status are an impediment to Diaspora communities' identification with the State of Israel, an impediment whose severity has been intensifying in recent years. In order to enhance the Diaspora's identification with Israel, this monopoly should be ended. At the same time, it should be recognized that religion is part of the Jewish national collective identity (as it is in other nation states), and many in Israel and overseas – not all of whom are necessarily religious – consider public and state religious expression as part of the State of Israel's Jewish character.

Increasing Aliyah from Europe

JPPI recommends that an administration be established within the Prime Minister's Office that will be responsible for advancing Aliyah from Western Europe in general and from France and Belgium in particular. The administration will focus the efforts of the various national and government bodies charged with Aliyah promotion, the Aliyah process, and immigrant absorption. It will deal with coordinating and managing all matters related to the Western European Aliyah continuum under a single integrated umbrella, with a single information system and a computerized information-management system, and by redefining the Aliyah and absorption continuum.

Intensive efforts are required in the two main areas that constitute key impediments to tens of thousands who have expressed great interest in making Aliyah to Israel and/or in migrating in general:

A committee should be established immediately and charged with the removal of impediments and with increasing the pace of Aliyah from France and Belgium. It will deal, among other things, with matters related to education, military service and ties to the IDF, academic and student affairs, employment, professional licensing and recognition of professional degrees, promoting the relocation of businesses, and investments. The committee's membership should include the directors general of the Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption, the Ministry of Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy, the Jewish Agency for Israel, and the World Zionist Organization, and should be chaired by the director general of the Prime Minister's Office.

Actions should be taken to promote Aliyah through cooperation with the Jewish Agency for Israel and the World Zionist Organization and to provide information in every possible way, including through active marketing to increase and renew programs to expose various target audiences to Israel, and through activities in smaller and more distant communities.

Explanation

Although there has been a consistent increase in the number of immigrants (olim) arriving from France over the past 15 months, it still falls far

short of the potential given the new reality in Europe. It is likely that focused efforts to provide solutions for the tens of thousands of Jews who have expressed interest in making Aliyah immediately will lead to the development of a dynamic of mass Aliyah of tens of thousands, or even more, from France.

Various indicators point to push factors leading to an increase in Jewish migration from France and Belgium to other countries. Along with the economic recession and the growing strength of the extreme right in Europe, and pull factors related to Israel's stable economy, another element has recently been added: the fear for the safety of European Jews in light of the expected return home of hundreds of European jihadist fighters trained in Syria and Iraq.

For a variety of reasons, most of which can be mitigated, Israel is not necessarily the preferred destination of these migrants. Turning the wave of emigration from France and Belgium into Aliyah to Israel requires targeted and focused action in cooperation with the relevant communities.

The French Jewish community is the largest in Western Europe, and for a variety of reasons it is also the community ripest for emigration. Various surveys indicate that an overwhelming majority of Jews do not have faith in the French government's ability to defend their institutions and are considering emigration. Therefore, this community has been selected as the focus of a pilot initiative of cooperation between government ministries and the national organizations.

Diaspora Communities

Jewish Identity in the Diaspora

Although Jews who identify as "Jews by religion" generally exhibit strong feelings of commitment and belonging to the Jewish people, we must continue to cultivate this population's connection to the Jewish people. This can be accomplished through interventions that continue throughout childhood, the teen years, and early adulthood. Therefore, high-level Jewish education, which is rich in opportunities for Jewish peer interaction and lasts throughout the teen years – summer camps, college classes in Jewish studies, and Israel trips – must be strengthened and supported.

Jews who report having no religion and lack a significant sense of belonging and commitment to the Jewish people present a greater challenge. The Jewish people should initiate experimental programs that encourage the rebuilding of their Jewish identity without diverting resources from more connected populations. Moreover, we must conduct further, mainly qualitative research in order to continue to clarify the correspondence between intermarriage and "Jews of no religion."

Toward a Unified Framework for Reporting Expenses and Activities of Federations and other Jewish Organizations

Federations and Jewish organizations should establish a unified and consistent framework for such reporting across Jewish communal philanthropic institutions in the U.S. and, if possible, other Diaspora communities. This framework should also apply to those organizations

not legally required to report to the IRS. Such a uniform framework would establish and define a clearly defined and agreed upon categorization of outlays in areas such as education, Israel, and social welfare. Such a framework would optimize planning and facilitate both longitudinal and inter-organizational comparison.

Explanation

Federations currently make public detailed information on their activities. What complicates discussion and policy analysis is that they vary considerably in how such support is characterized at a more aggregate scale in annual reports and other documents. Such variation make comparisons between time periods, organizations, and regions in regard to activities and expenses, as well as outcomes and achievements necessary for informed policy planning, needlessly cumbersome and difficult.

Greater Integration of Women into Leadership Positions

In order to promote the greater integration of women into the leadership positions in Federations and other Jewish organizations, JPPI recommends that each current leader **identify**, together with male candidates, at least **two women as potential successors** and begin the process of preparing them for possible succession.

In the **medium term**, the American Jewish community should commit to creating specific leadership programs for mid-career women to help them deal with present obstacles to their advancement and direct them to the leadership

positions that will become available in the upcoming years. Programs such as Harvard Business School's Women's Leadership Forum,¹ whose goal is to prepare women to sustain strategic advantage inside their organizations, could be used as models to be adapted to the Jewish community context.

Explanation

Women are seriously under-represented in the top leadership echelons of Jewish nonprofit organizations. This under-representation is connected to and exacerbates the alienation of Jewish youth from Jewish organizations and the organized Jewish community, leadership succession, and a lack of sufficient innovation among Jewish organizations. From the point of view of Jewish youth, lack of adequate representation of women in the Jewish leadership contributes to the image of Jewish organizations as anachronistic and hidebound. In regard to the issue of leadership succession, women make up the vast majority of the employees of Jewish organizations and constitute an important, yet underutilized, talent pool, which can contribute to leadership. With respect to innovation, it is well documented that leadership diversity contributes to organizational innovation.

Jewish Identity and Direct-to-Consumer DNA testing

Jewish communities and major Jewish organizations should set up bodies to provide information and programing for individuals who, through direct consumer DNA testing, believe

they have discovered that they have Jewish roots and wish to connect to the Jewish people. Part of the task of such agencies must also be to prevent DNA tests from becoming a device of alienation from the Jewish people.

Explanation

The last few years have witnessed a dramatic increase in the amount of interest in genealogical mapping. Dozens of new businesses now exist that enable consumers to trace their family history online by searching electronic documents; harnessing the power of virtual social networks and crowd sourcing, these businesses connect individuals with close and distant relatives to collaborate on building interconnected family trees.

Concurrently, advances in genetic research and computing technology have enabled direct-to-consumer (DTC) genealogical mapping through DNA analysis at affordable prices. These two methods of ancestry tracing have become interwoven.

Of the many discoveries made by individuals taking advantage of these advances in genealogical mapping is the possible existence of Jewish ancestry.

These developments offer new opportunities for connecting, engaging, and strengthening the bonds of the Jewish people.

Endnote

1. <http://www.exed.hbs.edu/programs/wlf/Pages/objectives.aspx>